

**NAVAL WAR COLLEGE  
Newport, RI**

**SPECIAL FORCES:  
THE PEACETIME REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT FORCE OF CHOICE.... and MORE.**

**By**

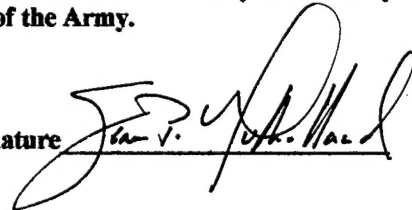
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**A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Joint Maritime Operations Department.**

**The content of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College, Department of the Navy, or Department of the Army.**

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**05 February 1999**

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## Abstract

*Regional engagement is a strategy that has no back door. Once a nation commits to that strategy and begins to energize it, there is no easy way out. Regional engagement has three levels of engagement: engagement in peacetime, engagement in conflict and engagement in war. Combatant Commanders utilize these different levels of regional engagement to foster development in their Area of Responsibility (AOR). As long as the United States demonstrates global leadership and promotes global cooperation, the U.S. military will be committed to this strategy for a long period of time. In Regional Engagement, Army Special Forces are the common denominator. Special Forces enter the engagement process on the ground floor during the peacetime engagement process and stay in theater throughout the continuum of conflict. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the "uniqueness" of Army Special Forces in terms of application in CINCs' engagement strategies. The second purpose is to familiarize other branches of the Army and other services on the versatility and applicability of Special Forces. Commanders need to understand the capabilities of Special Forces in order to increase their chances for success in an uncertain future.*

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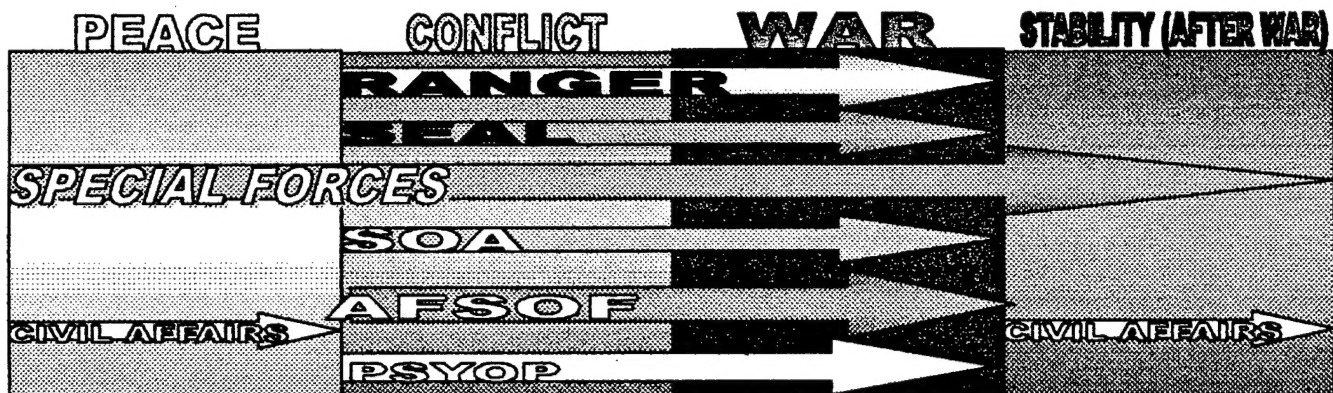
## I. INTRODUCTION

**"The ultimate in disposing one's forces is to be without ascertainable shape."**

**SUN TZU**

Since the predecessors of Special Forces with the Office of Strategic Service (OSS), Detachment 101 and the Jedburgh Teams,<sup>1</sup> Special Forces has been quietly getting the job done in regional engagement long before the 1995 National Security Strategy of "engagement and enlargement."<sup>2</sup> Special Forces are the nation's strategic economy of force and human early warning system. As Global Scouts, Special Forces provides a *global pulse* for the National Command Authority (NCA) and a *regional pulse* for Combatant Commanders (CINCs) on what problems are looming on the horizon to threaten democracy, alliances, economic stability or American prosperity.

Today, Special Forces are the CINCs workhorses in terms of continual regional presence in peace, conflict and war through presence, patience and perseverance. There is no other unit in the Department of Defense (DoD) that provides this capability or flexibility to the NCA and the CINCs. Special Forces are true implementers of National and Strategic Policy.



**Figure 1: Versatility/Participation of SOF in different types of Regional Engagements**

**Note: (96% of Civil Affairs (CA) and 85% of Psychological Operations (PSYOP) are reserves)**

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the "uniqueness" of Army Special Forces in terms of application in CINCs' engagement strategies. The second purpose is to familiarize the reader

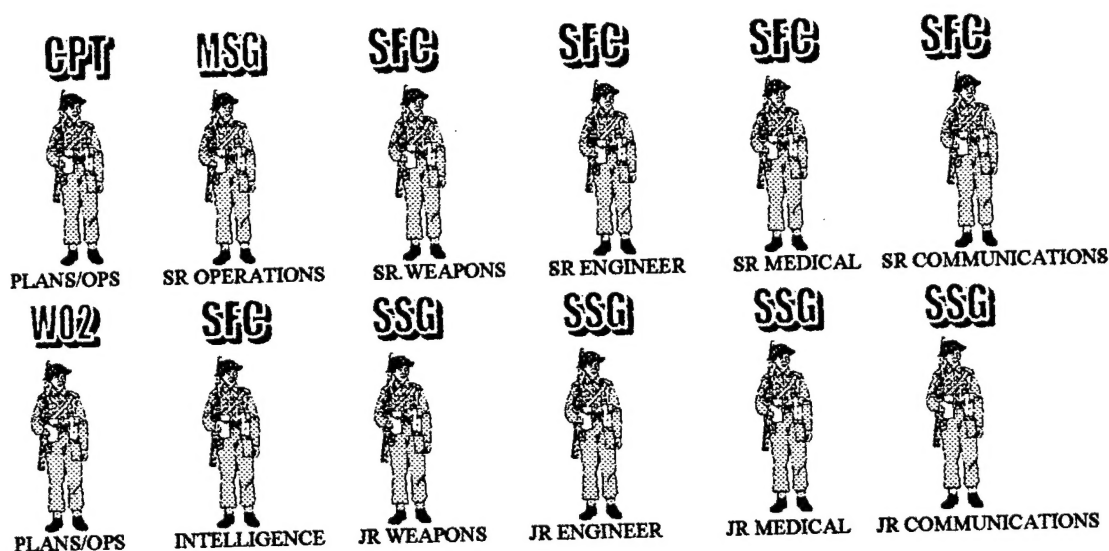
<sup>1</sup> Simpson, Charles M., *Inside the Green Berets: The First Thirty Years*. Presidio Press 1983, pp. 12-15.

<sup>2</sup> National Security Strategy: *A Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement*. The White House, July 1995, pp1-10.

on the versatility and applicability of Special Forces to the Army and other services. It is critical to educate the military and government agencies on the Army Special Forces roles in regional engagement. Special Forces are regional insiders who can enhance all variations of Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW) and war.

### LINEAGE

Colonel Aaron Banks, the father of Special Forces, conceived the original organization of Special Forces in 1952.<sup>3</sup> The organization was based on simplicity and flexibility. The base organization, the Special Forces Detachment Alpha or A-Team, consists of 12 men, commanded by an experienced Captain. The assistant commander is a Warrant Officer. The other ten members of the A-team consist of



*Figure 2: Special Forces "A" Detachment:: The foundation of Special Forces*

experienced, senior Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs)(see Figure 2). The A-team can operate in smaller elements. Based on the situation, the SF "A" detachment can subdivide into an "a team" and a "b team." It can also break into groups of 2 or 3 men to function as liaison officer teams (LNOs), liaison coordination elements (LCEs) or coalition support teams (CSTs).

<sup>3</sup>Simpson, Charles M., Inside the Green Berets: The First Thirty Years. Presidio Press 1983, p. 11.

The strength of Special Forces is the human element. Special Forces rely heavily on the ingenuity and capabilities of its people. This is critical because of centralized planning and highly decentralized execution of SF missions. Special Forces are not part on a weapon system such as the crew of an M1A1 tank, the crew of an aircraft carrier or a pilot of an F-16 fighter. On the contrary, the weapon system for Special Forces is ingenuity, compatibility to change and lethality. This constant makes Special Forces regional engagers. Special Forces is an omni-directional force that can adjust to changes in the global environment.



*Figure 3: Special Forces: Omni-directional Warriors*

Today, the United States Army Special Forces' primary mission is Foreign Internal Defense (FID).<sup>4</sup> The primary mission of Unconventional Warfare (UW) used primarily during WWII and Vietnam has been replaced due to a growth of democracy through numerous sources of influence in the 1980s and 1990s. A positive example of democratization through engagement is in the Southern Command (SOUTHCOM).

*"If you look back to about 20 years ago to 1978 there were about seven functioning democracies in Latin America. Today the area of responsibility of SOUTHCOM encompasses 32 countries. 31 of which are functioning democracies with free market economies."*<sup>5</sup> General Charles Wilhelm  
Commander, SOUTHCOM

<sup>4</sup> FM 31-20 Doctrine For Special Forces Operations, APRIL 1990.

<sup>5</sup> Interview: General Charles Wilhelm, *Jane's Defense Weekly*, December 16, 1998, p.10.

With the failure of communism, the United States stands as the single global superpower. The global community needs stability in order to facilitate prosperity- especially American prosperity. The National Security Strategy (NSS) defines this goal in order to give CINCs clear guidance.

## II. THE GUIDANCE

The 1997 National Security Strategy (NSS) builds on the 1995 NSS theme of engagement & enlargement through the application of economic, diplomatic, information and military power. The principle "core objectives" or goals are:

- 1.To enhance our security with effective diplomacy and with military forces that are ready to fight and win.*
- 2.To bolster America's economic prosperity.*
- 3.To promote democracy.*

In order to achieve these objectives, the National Security Strategy calls for the U.S. military to remain engaged abroad. The NSS talks about "shaping the international environment through diplomacy, international assistance, arms control, nonproliferation initiatives and military activities."<sup>6</sup> The critical link is the term "military activities" where the National Security Strategy gives guidance on how to use the U.S. Armed Forces in engagement and regional shaping.

Military activities play a critical role in the "shaping" process. Through forward stationing, deployment of forces, defense cooperation, security assistance, training exchanges, coalition exercises with allies and friends, our Armed Forces help to promote regional stability, deter aggression and coercion, prevent conflict and threats, and serve as role models for militaries in emerging democracies.<sup>7</sup>

The National Security Strategy also addresses integrated regional approaches to different problems unique to each region. The NSS gives guidance to each Combatant Commander on how challenges in their regions are perceived, what is the priority and what are the possible solutions.<sup>8</sup>

Once the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) derives implied and specified tasks from the National Security Strategy and the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), he writes the National Military

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<sup>6</sup> National Security Strategy for a New Century, May 1997, The White House, pp. i-ii

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, pp.1-3

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, pp.21-28



Strategy (NMS) with recommendations from the CINCs. The key phrase to the NMS is "shape, respond and prepare now."<sup>9</sup>

Shape signifies that as military professionals, the U.S. Armed Forces, through training, exercises and personal contact, can build rapport, train, assist, protect and eventually influence other nations and our future allies to enhance the United States' security posture. This is peacetime engagement.

Respond means to rapidly respond to any crisis in a timely manner anywhere in the world with the appropriate amount of decisive force in a given crisis or war. This is conflict/war engagement or warfighting.

Finally, prepare now means that the rules of the game have changed. The U.S. Armed Forces must have the advantage technologically and be the spear tip of the information age. The new threats are regional dangers, asymmetric challenges, transnational threats and "wild cards." Regional dangers are present today with the threat from numerous nations which have formidable military strength and have no problem challenging the United States or one of its' allies; examples are Korea, Iran, Iraq, and China. Asymmetric challenges are shadow forces (like terrorists or militants) that do not want to attack the U.S. operational center of gravity—the United States Armed Forces. Instead, their point of attack will focus on American vulnerabilities. This equates to conventional terrorism (bombings) or unconventional terrorism (the use of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and information warfare). Transnational threats know no borders (due to ethnicity, religion, organized crime, drugs, or arms sales). The "wild card" is any combination of the threats mentioned above in any given region or regions. Prepare now implies that the U.S. military has to think outside of the box in response to the unknown, uncertain future.<sup>10</sup>

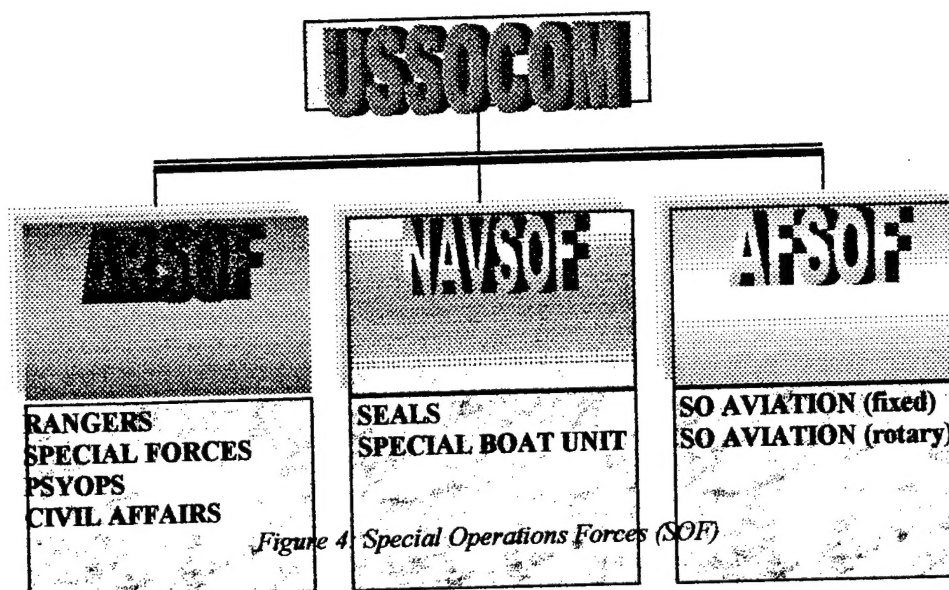
Force reduction has forced a change in the NMS from forward presence to force projection. Conventional forces deployed for long periods in the 1970s and 1980s in support of CINCs worldwide. Since the Beirut bombing of 1983, public opinion and resources available changed radically. The difference between the two strategies is the amount of military force the United States can rapidly bring to bear in a crisis or war. With force projection, there is an inherent risk that needs to be taken into account. That risk is

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<sup>9</sup> Shalickashvili, John M., "National Military Strategy of the United States of America: Shape, Respond and Prepare Now: A Military Strategy for a New Era", Pentagon, Sep 97, pp. 1-7.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, pp.8-10.

the factor of time. With force projection, time is critical factor in order to build up sufficient forces in the region. Remember it took four months to build-up forces in the Persian Gulf.



Special Operations Forces, particularly, U.S. Army Special Forces, provide the early warning.

The NSS and NMS are defined guidance on how the U.S. Armed Forces should prepare for and conduct actions in peace, conflict and war. In Special Operations, the major Unified Command is the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). Special Operations Forces (SOF) consists of Navy, Army and Air Force SOF (see figure 4). USCINCSOC has the responsibility to train, equip and deploy SOF units for action across the entire spectrum of military operations. It is critical to understand that USCINCSOC supports the Combatant Commanders, ambassadors and country teams with mission-capable forces.<sup>11</sup>

USCINCSOC gives guidance and direction to SOF in Joint Vision 2010 (JV2010). This document serves as the unified command vision on where and how SOF should be in the future. SOF supports the National Military Strategy's concept of "shape, respond and prepare now" by providing a host of options to the National Command Authority (NCA) and the CINCs. These options are also available to Joint Task Force (JTF) commanders and Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF) commanders. Commanders can employ specialized units to operate in austere environments. A CINC has the flexibility to

<sup>11</sup> United States Special Operations Forces Posture Statement, 1998, pp.1-4.

tailor the response in a given situation. An option is to use Special Forces as a strategic economy of force with enhanced capabilities to conduct crisis preclusion operations. There is no other force in the United States that can work independently in small groups and cover the globe. The relevance of SOF is that it compliments our National Military Strategy where "the NMS requires our Armed Forces to apply power to advance national security by helping shape the international environment and respond to the full spectrum of crises, while also preparing for the future."<sup>12</sup> Next it is important to examine where the regional engagement strategy is put into action.

### III. COMBATANT COMMANDERS' REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Regional Engagement is defined as "*regionally oriented military information gathering activities and proactive measures taken to influence international conditions in such a manner as to protect or advance U.S. interests abroad.*"<sup>13</sup> Each Combatant Commander has his own unique set of regional problems that are specific to his Area of Responsibility (AOR) or Theater. Examples of these regional problems are the religious fanaticism in Central Command (CENTCOM), the ethnic warring in Bosnia for the European Command (EUCOM) and insurgencies and drugs in Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) and Pacific Command (PACOM). Terrorism seems to be a constant challenge for all for all theaters and all Combatant Commanders. Each CINC derives a Regional Engagement Strategy to compliment the NMS and the NSS and engage his theater. Each individual theater may have a wide variety of crises. These crises span from peacetime engagement to conflict engagement to wartime engagement. CENTCOM's region is an example where different levels of engagement are happening simultaneously within the same region (i.e. war engagement with Iraq, peacetime engagement with military assistance missions in Kuwait and other Saudi allies in the region).

All of the CINCs Regional Engagement Strategies have contiguous themes such as engage, when feasible, every nation in the theater. All strategies strive to promote regional cooperation, stability and foster regional problem solving. The final point that is common to all strategies is to promote economic growth and democracy. The CINCs regional engagement plan gives specific priorities to what regional problems will be addressed and what states of regions will have priority of support. CINCs also address the

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<sup>12</sup> Schoomaker, Peter J., The Special Operations Team, Armed Forces International, February 1998, pp.32-34.

methods of support available to the AOR. These methods are Foreign Internal Defense (FID), humanitarian relief, training assistance, advisory assistance, peacekeeping operations, coalition training exercises, non-combatant evacuation operations (NEO), disaster relief, demining etc. All of these operations require Special Forces to be in a principal role or in a supporting role. Theater Special Operations Command (SOC) provides C2 for deployed SOF.

In times of peace, CINCs utilize various programs from Foreign Military Interaction (FMI) program to involve nations in order to strengthen ties with the United States. Combatant Commanders use Military Groups (MILGROUPS), DAOs (Defense Attache Officers), SAO (Security Assistance Officers) and MAAGs (Military Advisory Assistance Groups) to promote military engagement through military training, military exchanges and weapons sales. International Military Educational Training (IMET) is an exchange program where U.S. MILGROUPs send the young leadership of their nation to get a military education in the U.S. military education system. The School of the Americas (SOA) in Fort Benning, GA. has been instrumental in this program. This program develops strong ties and strong impressions in the future leaders of nations, friendly or enemy. Other programs include Program Exchange Program (PEP), Foreign Military Sales (FMS) and the Military Assistance Program (MAP). These are tools the CINC uses to engage nations through the different agencies like Department of State (DOS) and Department of Defense (DOD).

### THE PROBLEM

CINCs are tasked to get results in furthering the development of their theaters. In the past, with the forward presence strategy, there were large Theater Armies deployed and the CINC could utilize assets that belonged to him as he saw fit, however, they exist no longer. Today, with the force projection strategy, CINCs have to request assets from Forces Command (FORSCOM) which is highly doubtful because of other commitments and a year notification for resources or operational tempo (OPTEMPO). The best option is to request SOF through USCINCSO who has the primary mission to support the CINCs. The unit most requested from Country Teams from all over the world during peacetime engagement is Special Forces. The Armed Forces face apparent "zero-sum" game with expanding MOOTW commitments.

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<sup>13</sup> Bowra, Kenneth R. with William H. Harris, Regional Engagement: An ARSOF Approach to the Future Theater Operations, Special Warfare, Fall 1998, pp. 1-5.

Defense budgets and force structure has been drastically reduced. At best, DOD budgets will probably hover around 2.9-3.0 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for the foreseeable future.<sup>14</sup>

For monetary reasons, OPTEMPO, lack of flexibility with reduced numbers of forces, and possibly lack of experience in MOOTW, conventional forces will only be used in time of conflict (when it is seen as a threat to U.S. national security interests) and war. Conventional forces will play a significant role in regional conflict engagement and regional war engagement when it is deemed a priority. When it is not seen as a big priority to U.S. national interests, Special Forces will become the strategic economy of force and conduct regional engagement activities in a crisis preclusion role or a conflict preclusion role. When conventional forces enter a conflict or war, Special Forces participate as a combat multiplier conducting Special Reconnaissance (SR), Direct Action (DA) or serving as coalition support teams (CST). The real problem exists because conventional fighting forces are introduced critically late when it is time to fight.

Special Forces arrive early during peacetime engagement and stays to assist conventional commanders in conflict and war. Special Forces are the continuity through the spectrum of conflict and the spectrum of regional engagements.

### THE SOLUTION

Special Forces have enjoyed a great deal of freedom of action within all theaters based on the trust and confidence established over many years of professional work. Special Forces is the peacetime regional engagement force of choice based on their ability to work alone, joint, combined, or in a coalition. Many times SF works in austere environments with other nations or commands without difficulties. There are other reasons why Special Forces is the peacetime regional engagement force of choice.

*Expertise both in the culture and in the language of their assigned geographic areas make SF soldiers invaluable assets in pursuing U.S. policy in the developing world.*<sup>15</sup>

### IV. WHY SPECIAL FORCES?

One of the principle reasons to choose Special Forces for missions in MOOTW and war is for the flexibility and adaptability to austere situations in peace, conflict and war. Special Forces is the appropriate

<sup>14</sup> Taarpgard, Peter T., "The Defense Budget: Context and Constraints", The Naval War College, Newport, R.I., pp.5,8.

<sup>15</sup> Fischer, Joseph R., Cut from a Different Cloth: The Origins of U.S. Army Special Forces, Special Warfare, April 1995, p.29.

force in peacetime engagement because SF leaves a small signature. Often, it is politically unacceptable to the host nation to have a large force "invade" their country. The perception from non-military supporters is that a show of a large force on sovereign land is an intrusion. The public misconstrues this as another case of American intervention. Special Forces is a mature, experienced force with extensive experience in the region. Captains that grew up in other branches of the Army (commissioned as armor, field artillery, or infantry) later command the SF A-teams. The average age in Special Forces is 28 years old. Special Forces soldiers are truly regionally focused. Since 1961, Special Forces Groups (like a conventional brigade HQ) have each been assigned to a specific theater. Officers and NCOs spend years traveling all over the region working with the various militaries. Special Forces become intimate with the cultural idiosyncrasies, social problems, political systems, military forces, economic infrastructure and most importantly- they know the people. Special Forces is the best intelligence resource for Commanders.

Language skills have always been a requirement for Special Forces soldiers since the humble beginnings of the OSS. Today, language skills are even more critical and proficiency is at an all time high in Special Forces Groups. 95% of the 7<sup>th</sup> Special Forces soldiers speak, read and comprehend Spanish and Portuguese at a level 2/2 and above<sup>16</sup>(2-reading capacity/2 listening-comprehension capacity). This is an incredible language proficiency rating which demonstrates the dedication of these soldiers who know how important this is to their trade craft (essential skills).

Cross-cultural communications is another skill that is specific and critical to Special Forces. Knowing how to influence your host nation counterpart by knowing how he thinks is key. Rapport building is one of those intangibles that is critical in gaining the confidence of the host nation partners and is another key to the regional engaging and shaping process. Special Forces build rapport by careful observation and living in the same conditions as their counterparts. An example was the war in El Salvador in 1982, where Special Forces advisors ate, slept, trained and fought with the El Salvadorans. As a result, SF advisors enjoyed the trust and confidence of their allies which led to unprecedented success in a Low Intensity Conflict (LIC).<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Quarterly Training Brief, 7<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group, Sep 98. Note: 2/2 is the language proficiency rating. The first number indicates reading comprehension. The second number 1-2-3 indicates listening comprehension. 1-survival level 2-adequate/advanced 3-fluent.

<sup>17</sup> Waghelstein, John D., "EL SALVADOR: OBSERVATIONS AND EXPERIENCES IN COUNTERINSURGENCY," US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, 1 Jan 95, pp. 45-55.

*Special Forces build rapport in every theatre by doing what their counterparts do. And above all, Special Forces do not get upset when host nation counterparts do not do things the American way.<sup>18</sup>*

Special Forces have proven to be invaluable in the conduct of coalition warfare and coalition exercises. SF is the glue that holds coalitions together as was evident in Desert Shield/Desert Storm. Special Forces clearly understand their allies and potential enemies.

Special Forces provide ground truth to commanders and CINCs because of their physical position in the battle space and the ability to read the situation (situational awareness). When in MOOTW, human intelligence (HUMINT) through passive collection techniques assist intelligence assets and agencies interpret the developing situation.

Dispersion is one of the strengths of Special Forces. Small SF units can operate over a large range of area. Specialized communications like Satellite Communications (SATCOM) and High Frequency (HF) communications enable SF C2 elements to maintain control and receive information in near real time. This capacity provides the CINC regional coverage and regional engagement. On an average, 18 countries per quarter, per theater can be allocated some form of regional engagement activity in their nation every day of the year. This is a total of 18 A-teams x 5 active duty SF Groups. That is 90 nations engaged every day of the year not including the 2 reserve Special Forces Groups. This is regional engagement.

The final reason is that Special Forces are both economical and a strategic economy of force. USSOCOM budget for SOF is approximately 1.3% of the Defense of Defense budget and 1.4% of the military manpower.<sup>19</sup> Special Forces provide regional coverage for CINCs all over the globe for about 1/10<sup>th</sup> of the price of a conventional deployment. The strategic economy of force typifies Special Forces operations. Often it is neither economical nor politically correct (PC) to send in large conventional forces to a MOOTW situation where the end state is unclear. Another reason is that the nation in question is not a priority for the United States. Special Forces are "*Global Scouts: where the WORLD is our box.*"<sup>20</sup>

#### V. HOW SPECIAL FORCES?

Special Forces come in "tailor-to-task" packages capable of interoperability at all levels. These packages can vary from Liaison Officer (LNO), SF Detachment, company, battalion or group. The most common type of mission Special Forces has today is a Joint Combined Exercise for Training (JCET).

<sup>18</sup> Bruton, James K., LTC, The Subjective Side of Cross-Cultural Communication, *Special Warfare*, April 1994, pp. 28-31

<sup>19</sup> Schoomaker Peter J., General, United States Operations Forces Posture Statement, pp. 5, 43-45.



Special Forces detachments train developing militaries in various subjects such as light infantry and staff training. The preferred target audience for Special Forces is young officers, staff or senior NCOs. The objective is to teach the host nation in advanced skills. Through situational training exercises, JCETs train not only advanced warfighting skills but also, interaction with non-governmental agencies, international organizations, police and other services and agencies. The purpose is to demonstrate how outside agencies and other assets can enhance, not hinder, operations. The overarching objective is to train them so they can train themselves. This is called the "work yourself out of a job principle." The JCET comes in other forms also. It can be a combination of several A-teams and a B-team (SF company headquarters) for additional Command and Control. At times, an SF Battalion or SF Group is the appropriate force package to send immediately depending on the size and scope of the mission.

Coalition training exercises and coalition combat operations have seen a renewed enthusiasm recently due to the successful Desert Storm Coalition. In the future, the U.S. will favor fighting as a coalition to show solidarity against an aggressor. Coalition formations and operations are products of strong regional engagement strategies. In coalition operations and exercises, integration, communications and ground truth are keys for success. Special Forces provide the tools of language and intercultural communications to assist the Joint Task Force (JTF) and coalition commanders and guarantee success.

#### ***VI. WHEN SPECIAL FORCES?***

***Our ability to operate in environments short of war rests largely with a group of Army soldiers known as Special Forces.<sup>21</sup>***

In Military Operations Other than War (MOOTW), Special Forces play the most vital role to the CINCs peacetime regional engagement and conflict regional engagement. MOOTW, in accordance with FM 100-5 Operations, is "all combat and non combat activities that occur during peacetime and conflict."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Schoomaker Peter J. General, Speech before the SF Commanders' Course, Fort Bragg, NC, Nov 97.

<sup>21</sup> Fischer, Joseph R., Cut From a Different Cloth: The Origins of U.S. Army Special Forces, Special Warfare, April 1995, p.28



PEACE	CONFLICT	WAR
PEACE BUILDING DISASTER RELIEF REFUGEE OPERATIONS NATION ASSISTANCE CIVIC ACTION COUNTERDRUG DEMINING *ENVIRONMENTAL RECON	STRIKES & RAIDS PEACE ENFORCEMENT SUPPORT TO INSURGENCY ANTITERRORISM PEACEKEEPING NEO *COUNTERPROLIFERATION	LARGE SCALE COMBAT OPS ATTACK *DEFEND SPECIAL RECON DIRECT ACTION *COALITION OPS *INFORMATION OPERATIONS

\* denotes possible future missions \*denotes not conducted

*Figure 5: The Large Expanse of Missions Special Forces conducts in the Strategic Environment*

The definition in FM 100-5 for types of missions performed during peace, conflict and war are depicted in Figure 5.<sup>23</sup> Additional missions have been added since the latest revisions of FM 100-5 and FM 31-20.

Now it is important to give concrete examples of Special Forces demonstrating its capabilities.

### PEACE ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

In peace, Special Forces have demonstrated their flexibility and ability to work with nations, expertise in Milgroups and embassies and on occasion, other non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This is where Special Forces gets inside the host nation decision cycle through rapport building, military to military exchange and training. The mission is Foreign Internal Defense (FID) and here are some examples. Through Disaster Relief Operations: Special Forces have been involved in numerous disaster relief operations such as Hurricane Andrew in 1989, the earthquake in Aquile, Bolivia and recently Hurricane Mitch in Central America in December 1998. Often, Special Forces are the first units to arrive on the scene because they were in country already training FID to a nearby host nation unit. These SF units assume control and become the eyes and ears of the Military Group (MILGROUP) in country during the early hours of the crisis.

Through Humanitarian Relief Operations: Every year, in every theater, there at least 15 large scale medical readiness training exercises are conducted to aid the host nation in caring for it's people. Preventive medicine, veterinary medicine, and civic actions are keys to these types of operations. The key to success in humanitarian relief operations is getting the host nation military to work in concert with the host nations NGOs. The priority of work is always security, survival needs and infrastructure.

<sup>22</sup> FM 100-5, Operations, June 1993, pp. 2-0,2-1.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, pp. 2-1.

Through Demining training: The 7<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group and 1<sup>st</sup> Special Forces Group have been training other nations to conduct demining in Central America under the Organization of American States (OAS) and in Cambodia/Thailand under the United Nations (UN) respectively.

Through JCET training: Special Forces conduct JCETs in order to achieve the CINCs goal of regionalization for his theater. Special Forces conducted 1,525 JCETs in 1997 and 1,602 in 1998. An example of a JCET with a defined, regional purpose was in Ecuador in April 1998 by C 2/7 Special Forces. The goal was to demonstrate interoperability between U.S. SOF and integrate the Ecuadoran Armed Forces into a Joint Exercise. This was the model for JCETs in the future. The goal was accomplished. The Ecuadoran Armed Forces fought the exercise as a *Joint* team. The first time ever in Ecuadoran military exercised jointly. Another regional example is the African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI) mainly conducted by 3<sup>rd</sup> Special Forces Group. This is a training program of several nations that will become the African regional response force to respond to any crisis within Africa. Foreign Internal Defense (FID) is nation building and business is great and growing. Here are some other examples:

Through Regional Coalition Training exercises: There are great number of Regional Coalition Training Exercises that CINCs use to demonstrate regional engagement, regional cooperation and regional problem solving. Examples are Cabanas in Panama (SOUTHCOM), New Horizons in Central America (SOUTHCOM), Cobra Gold in the Philippines (PACOM), and the Partnership for Peace (PFP) Program in the U.S and Europe (EUCOM). Many of these exercises happen annually or biannually in certain theaters. In recent years, because of initial American leadership and continual U.S. participation, other nations involved have assumed lead roles in these exercises. For example, Cabanas 97 (SOUTHCOM) in Panama had an Argentine Commander of the Coalition.

Through Counterdrug Training: Counterdrug training takes place principally in SOUTHCOM and PACOM. Drugs and the illicit trafficking of drugs are an expanding global problem. The efforts in counter-drug training have been to help the host nations attack at the source zones of the drug trade. Special Forces and Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) train host nation forces on combat operations, seizure and intelligence collection.

Through Refugee Relief/Control Efforts: In 1989, thousands of Cuban Refugees were temporarily housed and cared for in Panama and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The Refugee Control Center was set up by

SOUTHCOM and run by the 7<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group with CA and PSYOP assets from United States Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command (USACAPOC) in Panama.

### CONFLICT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

In conflict, Special Forces many times are already on the ground as the situation or crisis is unfolding. Examples like the NEO in Liberia or Just Cause in Panama are only a few examples where Special Forces was in the fight before the bell rang.

Operation Just Cause: Special Forces of 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 7<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group lived on Fort Davis in Panama before the invasion started. Prior to the conventional action, Special Forces provided Special Reconnaissance Information and Direct Action against Panama Defense Forces (PDF). The Pacora River bridge action was critical in sealing the fate of the Panamanian Battalion 2000 who were trying to reinforce other units that were engaged. U.S. Army Special Forces provided ground interdiction to help stop the enemy.

Operation Safe Border: One of the best examples of a crisis resolved by regional cooperation is Military Observer Mission Ecuador Peru (MOMEPE). The crisis began in February 1995 as an armed border dispute between Peru and Ecuador. The International Community intervened and set up the Guarantor Nations (Pais Garantores) consisting of the US, Brazil, Chile and Argentina. United States Army Special Forces originally set the pace for the set-up and the sustainment of the MOMEPE base under the direction of SOCSOUTH and SOUTHCOM. In December of 1997, Brazil took the lead providing air and support assets to the observer mission. In September of 1998, Peru and Ecuador signed a permanent peace accord.<sup>24</sup>

Operation Joint Guard: Special Forces from the 10<sup>th</sup> Special Forces have been engaged in the Bosnia-Herzegovina conflict for the past three years. The work they are doing is critical to the SFOR Commander and the CINC. Special Forces soldiers are serving as Coalition Support Teams.

### WAR ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

*"U.S. Special Forces were superb in Coalition Warfare because they had been specially selected, trained and armed for this unique role. The Army years ago singled them out for their military expertise, then gave them the language and cultural training to communicate with their Arab counterparts. And because Special Forces for years have conducted military training exercises in the Middle East, they alone had the unique expertise to train the coalition forces and to keep them glued together."*<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Higgins, Kevin M., "Military Observer Mission Ecuador-Peru (MOMEPE) Doing a lot with a little," US Naval Post Grad School, 1 June 1997.

<sup>25</sup> Special Operations in Desert Storm: Separating Fact from Fiction. PAO, USASOC Special Warfare, March 1992, pp3-4.

The most recent example of Special Forces in war is Operations Deserts Shield and Desert Storm. Special Forces were actively engaged in making the Coalition work for SOCCENT. The formation and actions of the Desert Storm Coalition is considered to be the best example of Coalition Warfare and the application of Special Forces. Also, Special Forces A-teams conducted Special Reconnaissance (SR) missions in support of the Combatant Commander provided a capability of early warning that many conventional planners did not initially realize. General Schwarzkopf said: *"We put Special Forces deep into the enemy territory ....and they let us know what was going on out there, they were the eyes out there."* Furthermore, Special Forces conducted the only combined operation in the entire campaign in the battle of Khafji where Special Forces linked-up with Marines to take the city and defeat Iraqi troops.<sup>26</sup> Special Forces also contributed with several Direct Action missions to cut communications and destroy C2 structures.

## VII. CONCLUSION

Throughout history, The United States Army Special Forces have the main effort in engaging foreign militaries in times of peace and supporting the main effort in times of conflict and war. It is evident that Special Forces are the *CINCs' heavy lifters* and National Strategy implementers during peacetime regional engagement activities. Special Forces accomplish eighty five to ninety percent of the peacetime engagement missions in every region. There is no other unit in the United States Armed Forces that can mirror the unique capabilities of Special Forces. In peacetime regional engagement, CINCs use Special Forces as the centerpiece for implementing national strategy.

In regional conflict engagement, more often, Special Forces are used as regional experts and force multipliers, (LNOs/CSTs) if there is an introduction of a conventional force, as is the case in Bosnia. If the conventional forces do not enter the conflict, Special Forces take the lead with the theater Special Operations Command (SOC) or assist another nation that is in command. An example of this is Military Observer Mission Ecuador-Peru (MOMEPE).

In war engagement (warfighting), Special Forces are in a support to the conventional commander role. SF provides LNOs, CSTs, SOCCs, teams to conduct DA and SR missions. Special Forces can also be used in an economy of effort role, as was the case in WWII where teams were dropped behind enemy lines

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid, pp. 7-8.



Figure 6: The Regional Engagement Model (MAIN-Main effort, SUPPORT-Support Main Effort).

to create chaos conducting unconventional warfare (UW) (see Figure 6).

The National Military Strategy talks directly to the conventional Armed Forces. The principle directive is to prepare for war fighting and maintain a high level of readiness in anticipation of future conflict or war. This is the priority for conventional forces. Conventional forces will deploy to regional conflicts and war that jeopardize U.S. national interests and no more (i.e. Rwanda 1995: U.S. Forces did not deploy to area to protect innocent civilians that were being slain by warlords because it was not a priority). This is clear guidance for conventional forces and implied guidance for SOF to support conventional forces in conflict (Bosnia) and war (Persian Gulf).

*"Our Armed Forces' foremost task is to fight and win our Nation's wars. Consequently, America's Armed Forces are organized, trained, equipped, maintained and deployed primarily to ensure that our Nation is able to defeat aggression against our country and to protect our national interests."*<sup>27</sup>

Here is another way to look at the difference between conventional war fighters and regional engagement forces (Special Forces).

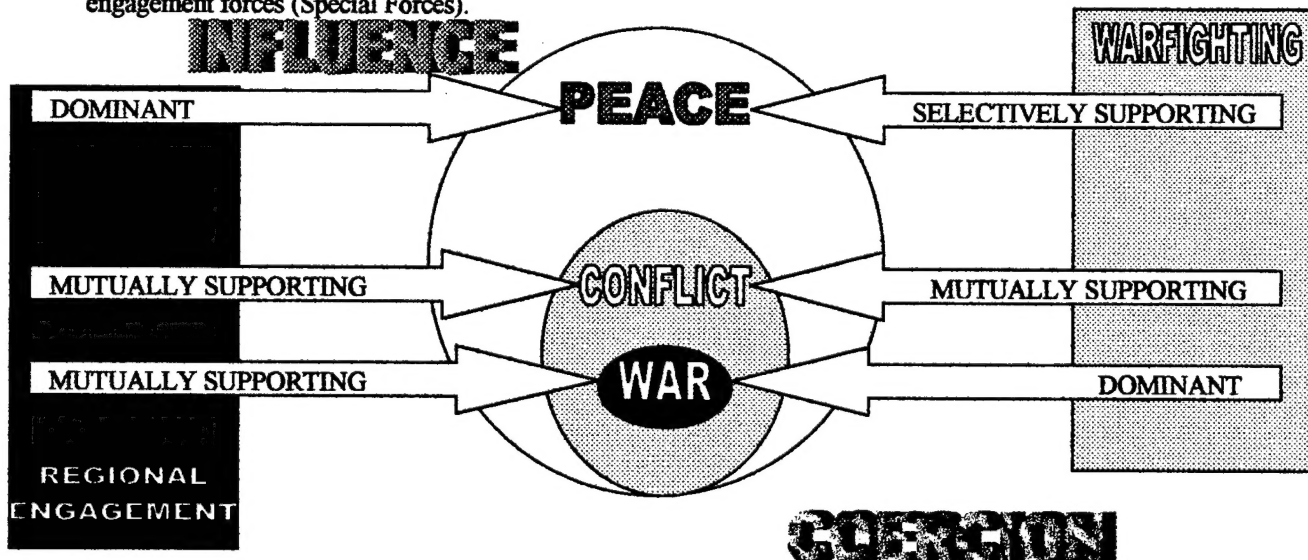


Figure 7: Operational Environments and Dynamics: Conventional vs. Special Forces.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup>Shalikashvili, John M., "National Military Strategy of the United States of America: Shape, Respond, Prepare Now: A Military Strategy for a New Era," Pentagon, Sep 97, page 5.

Note: Figure 7 explains the regional engagement environment versus the warfighting environment. Special Forces influences host nation counterparts by training and mutual exchange on the personal and professional levels. Conventional forces coerce through show of force, deterrence or overwhelming combat power.

Conventional forces will focus all efforts on training for and winning the fight. Who concentrates on regional engagement and strategic shaping before and after conflict or war? The answer is forward-deployed Special Forces and conus-based Special Forces. It is peculiar that the NMS does not mention SOF or SF anywhere in the document. The NMS refer to peacetime engagement in this manner:

*"Peacetime military engagement encompasses all military activities involving other nations intended to shape the security environment in peacetime. Engagement is a strategic function of all our Armed Forces, but it is a particularly important task of our Armed Forces overseas—those forward stationed and those rotationally or temporarily deployed. Engagement serves to demonstrate our commitment; improve interoperability; reassure allies, friends and coalition partners; promote transparency; convey democratic ideals; deter aggression; and help relieve sources of instability before they can become a military crisis."*<sup>29</sup>

The quote above is the Special Forces job description in the peacetime, regional shaping role. The takeaway from this is that Special Forces participates in all types of regional engagement strategies. The common denominator in all types of military operations (ATOM-ops) is Special Forces. Special Forces play the largest role in regional engagement and strategic shaping because peacetime engagement is happening all the time.

With the undefined parameters of the future, The United States has to implement listening post/observation post strategy or LP/OP strategy to fully protect U.S. National interests. LP/OP strategy infers that Special Forces is out there close to potential enemies, providing early warning or rapid response. Peacetime regional engagement enables Special Forces to get into global position: establishing combat outposts needed to provide early warning and prepare for all contingencies from the ground.

Applications for Special Forces in the future seem boundless. Counter-proliferation of WMD, environmental recon and Netcentric ground reconnaissance are a few of the potential missions in the future. In all cases-boots have to be on the ground to effect the situation. Special Forces will be ready.

<sup>28</sup> Bowra, Kenneth R. and William H. Harris, "Regional Engagement: An ARSOF Approach to Future Operations," Special Warfare, Fall 1998, p. 5.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, p. 7.

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